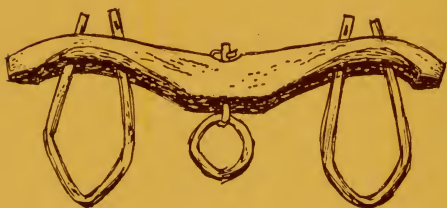




SUT LOVINGOOD
TRAVELS WITH OLD
ABE LINCOLN




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SUT LOVINGOOD

Travels with Old Abe Lincoln

Sut Lovingood
Travels with Old
ABE LINCOLN



George Washington
Harris & Introduction
by Edd Winfield Parks



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INTRODUCTION



ACCORDING to his own estimate, Sut Lovingood was a "nat'ral-born durn'd fool," and his mission in life was to raise "pertickler hell." At the beginning of *Sut Lovingood's Yarns*, George W. Harris describes his story-spinning East Tennessee mountaineer as "a queer looking, long legged, short bodied, small headed, white haired, hog eyed, funny sort of a genius"; he allows Sut to describe himself, more effectively: "I say, George, every critter what hes ever seed me, ef they has sence enuff tu hide frum a cummin calamity, ur run frum a muskit, jis' knows five great facks in my case es well es they knows the road tu thar moufs. *Fustly*, that I haint got nara a soul, nuffin but a whisky proof gizzard, sorter like the wust half ove a ole par ove saddil bags. *Seconly*, that I'se too durn'd a fool tu

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cum even onder millertary lor. *Thudly*, that I hes the longes' par ove laigs ever hung tu eny cackus, 'sceptin only ove a grandaddy spider, an' kin beat *him* a usen ove em jis' es bad es a skeer'd dorg kin beat a crippled mud turkil. *Foufly*, that I can chamber more cork-screw, kill-devil whisky, and stay on aind, than enything 'sceptin only a broad bottum'd chun. *Fivety*, an' las'ly, kin git intu more durn'd misfortnit skeery scrapes, than enybody, an' then run outen them faster, by golly, nor enybody."

Sut was not, by nature, a political commentator. He was a Halloween prankster who pulled his crude and often cruel practical jokes on every possible occasion, and who told of these exploits with a tremendous Rabelaisian humor, a fine regard for the effect of his story, and a callous disregard of the physical pain to his victims. Until 1861, Harris kept Sut close to home, in the Tennessee mountain region between Virginia and Georgia; not until Lincoln's inaugural journey did he allow Sut to roam into any other section.

These sketches on Lincoln follow closely the pattern evolved by Harris. They are oral stories, related by a man who can neither read nor write, and the style approximates speech.

Harris frequently encloses a yarn within a slight framework, where, in contrast to Sut's crude and vivid speech, he talks with precise correctness. Here, Sut delivers a monologue, but he allows Mr. Lincoln a larger conversational part than he usually permits to other characters. Also, Sut talks more, and does less, than is customary. The wild prank of dressing Lincoln as a cross-barred man is in Sut's best manner, and the teller works up to this; but he depends more on anecdote and verbal wit than he did in the collected *Yarns*.

Sut lives in a fantastic world of his own creation. His world is at once fore-shortened, and highly magnified. By this treatment, the most ordinary social event becomes unique and peculiar: a dance leads, inevitably, to some trick which cripples half the dancers; a quilting leads Sut to make a horse run away, and kill the lady who gave the quilting; a sermon provides an opportunity for testing the effects of lizards placed in a preacher's pants leg. Fun is largely physical, and the greatest amount of fun is secured by causing a maximum amount of physical discomfiture to a victim — preferably dignified or conceited. Pain hardly exists, save as something humorous; it has no reality. And

conscience has no part in Sut's life: although he has made elaborate preparations to frighten a horse into running away, he says, "tarin down that lim' wer the beginin ove all the troubil, an' the hoss did it hissef; my conshuns felt clar es a mountin spring." And Sut can answer, as to the cause of Mrs. Yardley's death: "Nuffin, only her heart stop't beatin 'bout losin a nine dimunt quilt. True, she got a skeer'd hoss tu run over her, but she'd a-got over that ef a quilt hadn't been mix'd up in the catastrophe."

Sut deals with homely and localized events, but he has exaggerated his characters and events until they are far removed from a normal focus. Abraham Lincoln, in these sketches, is less a person than an animated clothes-horse, made to serve as the butt of Sut's joke; he is consistent in the fictitious world, but the character has only the vaguest points of reference with the real person. To appreciate the art of George W. Harris requires a fairly complete and willing suspension of disbelief.

For Harris, on a small scale and within strait limits, was an artist. This is best revealed in his language. He followed the customary practice in misspelling words for comic effect, even when there is no point to the error; but his

humor is not dependent on these mistakes. His superiority over his fellow-humorists can best be illustrated through his comparisons. They are apt, concrete, and homely; they spring immediately from the life of the mountaineer; they have poetic exactness combined with a far-fetched yet appropriate descriptiveness. Lincoln's legs go in "at each aidge sorter like the prongs goes intu a pitch fork"; "fools break out like measils"; and, from the *Yarns*, "yu might jis' es well say Woa tu a locomotum or suke cow tu a gal"; "sich a buzzim! Jis' think ove two snow balls with a strawberry stuck but-ainedd intu bof of em." (The reference to Lincoln as "the old par ove Windin Blades," is colloquial and goes back to common Middle English usage; the term was used to designate the pair of long blades on which the yarn was wound.)

Harris was a part of a wide-spread and popular group of writers, most of whom published anonymously, though a few became well known. These humorists produced a great body of literature which appeared mainly in newspapers and was widely re-printed; Mr. Franklin J. Meine writes that "literally thousands of humorous frontier stories and sketches went the round of the American press." A few men gath-

ered their sketches into books. Augustus Baldwin Longstreet's *Georgia Scenes* (1835), the first and in some respects the most notable, dealt humorously but realistically with the backwoods Georgia life. Longstreet's example was followed by other able writers. William Tappan Thompson who made of *Major Jones's Courtship* (1844) a pleasant story of the bashful wooings of a good-hearted, unsophisticated Georgia cracker. Johnson J. Hooper, in the *Adventures of Simon Suggs* (1845), and Joseph G. Baldwin, in *Flush Times in Alabama and Mississippi* (1853), describe an even rougher frontier life, and Hooper delineates a shrewd and vulgar rascal. These books, because they have a definite individuality, stand out from the rich welter of early humorous writing.

None is more individual than the collected and uncollected tales of Sut Lovingood. Harris was unsurpassed at the knack of telling a good yarn, and he permitted nothing to get in the way of his story. He pointed no moral; he did not attempt to present realistic or representative scenes and characters; he was not squeamish in his language, which was vividly racy, or in his attitude about sex. These qualities have in the past been held to Harris's discredit, and

his work denounced as coarse. It may be, but it is also lively and full of life, and it is superbly humorous. As Mr. Meine remarks: "For vivid imagination, comic plot, Rabelaisian touch, and sheer *fun*, the *Sut Lovingood Yarns* surpass anything else in American humor."

George Washington Harris, Junior, was born in Allegheny City, Pennsylvania, March 20, 1814. His father was descended from a Sir George Harris, of Brentwood, near London; his mother, Margaret Glover Bell Harris, had a son by a previous marriage who was working as apprentice in an arms factory in Pittsburg when George was born. Soon after the war ended, Samuel Bell emigrated to Knoxville, Tennessee. By 1820, the Harris family had accompanied or followed him.

Knoxville had less than one thousand inhabitants. It was near the mountains, and on the navigable Tennessee River. Sam Bell opened a jewelry shop; early in life George Harris, whose total schooling did not exceed eighteen months, was apprenticed to him. Bell prospered and became locally prominent, later serving as mayor (1840-42, 1844-46). His apprentice presumably did well, and won some distinction for in-

ventiveness: after the steamboat *Atlas* visited Knoxville in 1826, George constructed and demonstrated a miniature boat of his own. Before he reached his majority, he was captain of the *Knoxville*.

One incident from his river days has a particular relevance here. In 1838, Captain Harris was transporting the Cherokee Indians down the river, as one step in their removal west. General Winfield Scott was in command, and on one occasion, while on Harris's boat, he countermanded the captain's order. Scott was six feet four, Harris only five feet six, but he delivered this ultimatum: "I am captain of this boat; my orders are going to be obeyed, and if you in any way attempt to interfere, my next order will be to place you on shore." No more orders were countermanded. Although the picture of "Old Fuss and Feathers" follows the traditional humorous account, Harris may well have taken a personal pleasure in drawing the long bow at the General's expense.

There is no definite record as to when or why Harris quit the river. He had married Mary Emeline Nance on September 3, 1835, and to them six children were born. By 1840, he had become interested in politics, writing vigorous

but ephemeral articles for the Knoxville *Argus* in favor of William Henry Harrison. In 1843 he opened a shop, and advertised that he possessed material, tools, and machinery for making "Jewelry and Silver Ware, Copper-plate and Wood Engraving . . . Surgeons' and Dentists' Instruments . . . model Steamengines for Colleges" and similar items. Often he tinkered with mechanical things, making a churn turned with a handle, and inventing a railway switch that was widely used. Some of his work he described in the *Scientific American*.

In 1843, also, he helped to found the Young Men's Literary Society of Knoxville, and he began to contribute sporting letters to William T. Porter's *Spirit of the Times*. His first humorous sketch, over the name "Sugar-tail," appeared in 1845. It indicates the type of sketch which Harris was to write: he describes a mountain dance, at the home of a man who can "belt six shillins worth of corn-juice at still-house rates and travel — can out shute and out lie any feller from the Smoky mounting to Knoxville . . . can make more spinnin-wheels, kiss more spinners, thrash more wheat an more men than any one-eyed man I know on." Drinking, kissing, fighting, and practical jokes pre-

dominate, in this and later sketches, but not until 1854 does Sut Lovingood appear. After Porter's death, Harris contributed to other papers, notably the New York *Atlas* and the Nashville *Union and American*.

He gained fame as a raconteur. His friend Elbridge Gerry Eastman (successively editor of the *Argus* and the *Union*) told in print one of Harris's stories: of a catfish which got into a whisky jug and grew to fit the jug exactly. Another, which became famous, concerned a mountain woman who ended her story, "I tell ye, cap'n, this country is fine on men and hosses, but it's Hell on women and cows." He said that he knew men whose glances would addle eggs and who could spit a blister, and he made free use of these oral yarns in his written work. According to family tradition, Sut was based on a real mountaineer who carried the chain when Harris surveyed the Ducktown copper mines in Southeastern Tennessee.

Harris busied himself with many things, besides writing: in 1844 he held some position with the postoffice department; he continued to work in metals; he built a glass factory and was interested in an iron foundry; he contemplated editing a newspaper; and he served for

over a year (1857-58) as postmaster of Knoxville. For all his diversity of occupations, he apparently prospered until the Civil War disrupted his way of life.

Knoxville was strongly unionist (an East Tennessee convention met there in 1861 and petitioned for admission as a separate state), and Samuel Bell wore an American flag throughout the war; but Harris was a democrat and a secessionist. After Lincoln's inauguration, he wrote the sketches included in this book, and, though good-humored, they reveal his feelings. So he left Knoxville with his family and moved to Nashville; then on to Chattanooga, where he worked in an armory; after its capture, to Decatur, Alabama; and on to Trenton, Georgia, where he acquired a partnership in a saw-mill and where his wife, worn out by the hardships of war, died.

After the war, Harris drifted into railroading, and became superintendent of the Wills Valley Road. In 1867 his one book was published, and he began to contribute sketches to Knoxville and Chattanooga newspapers. On October 19, 1869, he married Mrs. Jennie E. Pride, of Decatur. Undoubtedly, life had brightened for him, when, a month later, he went to Richmond

to arrange for the publication of a second book. On the trip home, Harris evidently suffered a heart attack which prostrated him so completely that the train crew thought him drunk. At Knoxville, he was moved by friends to a hotel, where he rallied enough to recognize a brother-in-law and to murmur the word "poisoned" before he died, on December 11, 1869. No autopsy was performed, and it is possible that he was murdered; probably, he died of heart failure.

For all his varied and useful life, George W. Harris is remembered today because of Sut Lovingood. The "skeery," long-legged, whisky-drinking and yarn-spinning mountaineer is a slight but authentic creation, who is not likely to be forgotten as long as men like a salty character and a highly-seasoned humorous tale.



SUT LOVINGOOD

*Travels with Old Abe as his
Confidential Friend and Advisor*



WHEN I told you, George, that I wer agwine tu travel with ole Abe Link-Horn, you thought I wer a lyin; but now ye see I'm here, aint I? I jis struck across country and ketch'd up with him at Harrisburg, (durn sich a place, I say) an I hev stuck clost to the ole Windin Blades till I got him safe intu this heer tavrin, they calls hit "Willard's," an I'm durn ef the ole hoss ove the house aint a jedge ove liker. Ive tasted hit I has, an Ill tell ye anuther thing, ole Windin Blades am sleepin in the same rume what I dreamed ove in one thousand eight hundrd an fifty-six, whar Ole Buck played that orful game of kerds with Fill an Freemount fur the President's cheer, an won hit too, an he prides hissself in sittin in hit more by a durnd site nor them dus what set him thar.

But es I wer agwine tu tell you, es I wer a git-tin thru Bald-timore I seed a feller a sittin ontu a barrel a filin at the lock ove a durned ole revoltin pistil. Sez I, "Mister, are ye gwine tu war?" "Yes," sez he, "I'm gwine tu bore ole Abe's years fur him es he cums along."

I went a piece funder an seed another fat ole tub a cuttin a cheese with a nife a foot long. "That's a monsous nife, Mister," sez I. "Y-a-w," sez he, " I means tu feel ole Abe's haslet with hit," sez he.

I rocked along, an seed another feller a rubbin brite a orful cannon, hit wer es big es a pump log. "Gwine tu shute?" sez I. "Not jist yet," sez he, a measurin my hite an heft with his eye. "When are ye gwine tu shute, ef I moute be so bold?" "Day arter tumorrow," sez he, "I'm jist gwine tu take Ole Abe in the place what fust tetches a hoss, an dam ef he don't lite beyant Washintun, hit il be that this yere powder aint good"; an he dipped up a tin cup full outen a barrell and poured hit back like hit wer whisky. Jist about this time the ideur got onder my har that Bald-timore warn't much tu speak ove, fur ole Windin Blades, an that they ment tu hev a funeral outen him when he got thar. So I put out tu meet him an tell ove the imedjut

rath tu cum, an the orful tribulashun barrelled up fur his widder an that promisin sun, Bob, ove his'n. Now, George, Bob may make a mon-sous fine man, I don't say he won't; but es a boy — mind, I say es a boy — I'm d—d ef I fancy him a bit. Sum feller will turn him inside out sum of these days, see ef he dont; (an who knows but hit would improve the little critter). He can't live es he is, that's surtain.

Well, when I told old Windin Blades what I had seed an hearn, his eyes sorter bulged and sorter spread, an his mouf swelled out, an sez he, "I hain't perpared tu die, Suttty, my Sun" — he calls me Suttty when he wants help, an Mister Lovingood when he's got his dignity on, an a passel of flat backs roun him an he feels good an safe — "I hes dun the things I hadn't orter, an lef ondun the things I had orter," an here he hung down his hed an studied a long time, while I sot still an tuk a ginerol observa-tion ove a President, an if he aint a long wun an a narrow wun, I'm durned. His mouf, his paw, an his footzes am the principil feeters, an his strikin pint is the way them ar laigs ove hizen gets inter his body. They goes in at each aidge sorter like the prongs goes intu a pitch fork. Ove all the durned skeery lookin ole cusses fur

a president ever I seed, he am decidedly the durndest. He looks like a yaller ladder with half the rungs knocked out.

I kotch a ole bull frog once an druv a nail thru his lips inter a post, tied two rocks tu his hine toes an stuck a darnin needil inter his tail tu let out the misture, an lef him there tu dry. I seed him two weeks arter wurds, an when I seed ole Abe I thot hit were an orful retribution cum ontu me, an that hit were the same frog, only stretched a little longer, an had tuck tu warin ove close tu keep me from knowin him, an ketchin him an nailin him up agin; an natral born durn'd fool es I is, I swar I seed the same watry skeery look in the eyes, an the same sorter knots on the "back-bone." I'm feard, George, sumthin's tu cum ove my nailin up that ar frog. I swar I am, ever since I seed ole Abe, same shape same color same feel (cold as ice) an I'm d— ef hit aint the same smell. Sumthin orful es tu happen me in spite ove these yere laigs, much as I 'pends on 'em, see ef hit don't

Well, arter he had studied an sighed, an sorta groaned a long time, he ris his head up an sez he, "Sutty, what had I best do in this orful emergency? The party can't spare me now, besides I ain't fit tu die, an my wiskers hev just begin tu

grow an I want tu try the vittils in Washintun City; hit won't du tu let me be made a sefter by these seseshun bullits just at this time. Will it, Suttu, my son?"

Sez I, "Mister Linkhorn, Ise called a natral born durn'd fool in Tennessee, but I think I ken averidge in these parts purty well, an ef you will jist put yeself in onder my keer; an ef ole Scott cums a cluckin about with his wings a trailin, or ole Sea-Ward cums a whinin an a smellin an a scrachin onder the door, jist gin the tavrin keeper the hint to hist thur cotails with his boot an that you'l pay fur toein one of em ef he busts em. I'l be Constitutionally, sirkumstantially, an indiscriminately durned, ef I don't put you safe tu bed with Missis Linkhorn at Willard's Tavrin. I'l du hit; d'ye see these yere laigs"; an I hilt one straite out abuv the lamp what sot ontu the tabil.

He looked at me mournfully fur a minit, an his eyes run over, and sez he, "Suttu, my son, I'l du hit, an ole Abe wont lie, so gin yer orders an fix things; now I feel like I will be President yit"; an he pulled out a pint bottel frum onder the piller ove the bed an he measured hit with his thumbs one over the other from the bottom tu the top ove the whisky, an thar wer jist

seven-thumbs; he then mesured back four an hilt the last thumb fast an run the neck ove the bottel in onder his nose about four inches; when he turned hit up agin thar wer a half inch clar day lite onder the thumb, an he sot hit ontu the table. When he cotch his breff, says he, "I never encourages eny wun tu drink, but thars the bottel an hit hes your whisky in hit." I tuck abourd the ballance. I did, an we went tu bed. Now how I got him tu Washintun Il tell you next time we meet. Good bye. Say, George, ye never seed old Abe, did ye? Well, youve missed a site, nur seed Bob? — No, nur the ole oman? No. Well, Ise sorry, fur you aint yet ready tu die.



SUT LOVINGOOD

With Old Abe on His Journey



WELL, es I told you, we went tu bed arter that onekally divided horn and I sot in tu sleepin in yurnest, when I hearn “kerdiff, kerdiff”— an thar stood the old par ove Windin’ Blades, jis as he cum inter the world, his shut hung on top ove the bed postez, an he hed his red flannin drawers in his hand by the laigs, a thrashin ove em agin the wash stan; then he peeped down wun laig and then down tother; then he turned em inside out and zamined onder the seams from aind to aind.

Sez I, “Whats rong? Ar yu huntin fur a se-seshunist in as narrer a place as them ar drawer laigs?”

He shook his hed, and still zamined the seams. At last sez he, “Sutty, my sun, are you troubled much with flees down South?”

“Not es I no’s ove; our dogs are sumtimes,” sez I, “an we allers kicks em out when they scratches.”

“Well,” sez he, “I’ve allers had more ur less vexashun ove spirit with em, an the nier I gets tu Washintun city the wus they ar; ef thar number an enterprize encreases es they hev dun, afore I am thar a week, I’ll be a dead man,” an then he reached down both hands and scratched both laigs, frum his ankles up to his short ribs, an hit sounded like rakin’ ove a dry hide with a curry comb, an then he cum tu bed agin, but kep on a rakin’ ove hissef an sorter a cussin onder his breff.

Sez I, “holler up a nigger an git sum more tangle-laig.”

“What’s tangle-laig, Suttu?”

“Sum truck like what you hed in that ar lone-some lookin feller a standin on the tabil by hissef.”

“Do you want sum more?” sez he.

“I dus that, onless you’l go tu sleep.”

He got up an drug a ole har trunk from onder the bed. When he turned back the led, thar the bottils stood jis like sogers ove a muster day ur a Docturs Medicin chist. We divided wun tolerable far atwixt us an wur a fixin fur a sleep an

a talking ove fleas an how I would git him safe tu Washintun, when a thunderin knockin cum ontu the door. Ole Windin Blades jumped outen bed an agin the lock at one pop an keerfully opened the door, a holdin tu the handil with boff hands. Ater he seed an knowd em he opened, when in popped two fellers in store close an a Sorrel irish-mun with flax mane an tail; an he hed a letter. Ole Abe sot up cross laiged in a cheer in his shirt-ail an read hit a long time, fust wun side up an then tuther, an ater talkin an whisperin a spell they left.

Sez he, "Sutty, my son, this ar a dis-patch from Ginerel Scott, and hit proves what you sed about Bald-timore tu be true, an a tarnal site wus. He sez that Alek Stevens am thar with a twelve-pounder strapped ontu his back an a lit rich pine torch in his hand awaitin fur me, an that hit is loaded with a quart ove escopet (old Scott calls everything escopet thats round) balls, three smoothin irons, four par ove butt hinges, an a gross ove shoe tacks, an the ole Ginerel thinks frum his nolidge ove perjectils that ef it wer turned loose ontu me that my hide would be es well opened out es a fish net, an my close made redy tu stop cracks in a rain barril."

I jumped plumb outen bed an lit afore him

an looked him stedy in the eye fur a minit an I felt that I wer a standin fur the fust time afore a man I warnt feared ove, an tu, I knowed wer scaser ove sence then I wer, an I wer glad I had found him, fur you know, George, that I thot I wer the king fool ove the world, and aller felt shamed an onder cow about hit. *Aleck Stephens totin a twelve pounder*. I stood stonished, fust et him an then et old Scott, two bigger fools in the world than me, an boff on em able tu read an rite an a holdin high places in the naseun. Sut's got a chance yet, thinks I.

Sez I, "Mister Link-Horn (an I were skeered at the boldness ove my own voice) du you onderstand southern law!"

"No," sez he, "only es hit tetches niggers."

"Well," sez I, "I'll tell ye sum nolidge ove hit hes saved my life fur the last twenty years, twiest a year, an hit may save yourn once a month ef ever ye cum out thar, not tu speak of hits imedjut use in this imargincy. When we lects our Governers we lects a fool-killer fur every county an furnishes him with a gun; sum asnic, stricknine, an a big steel trap, an hit is his juty to travel, say about wun day ahine the Suckit Rider. You see, the Suckit Rider gethers the people together an hit makes hit more con-

venent, an he kills off the stock ove fools tu a considerabil extent every round he takes. Our fool-killers hev dun thar juty, an consekently the South hev seceded. Ise been a dodgen em sence I wer able tu run, an I now tell you, Mister Link-Horn —”

“Stop, stop, *Sutty, my sun,*” sez he, “I wants tu ax you a questun; why don’t you stop the breed in a more humane way by emaxulation an still let em live? the decleration ove independence, you no,” sez —.

“Stop,” sez I, fur I found I wer on risin groun, “an I’l tell yu why emaxulashen wont kiver the case, no more nor freein or stealin a nigger il make him a white man. Fools break out like measils. They cums from the best familys. An agin a neighborhood ove fools will sumtime breed a smart fellow. Just look at Sea-Ward as a sampil, or yerself. Yu cum from Kaintuck. An hit perjused Hart, a feller hu makes people out-en stone, till they kin du everything but drink, talk an propugate thar speches; an caze they can’t du that he’s an onmitigated durned fool for makin em stead ove rale livin folks. Spose the fool killer wer tu kill (as in juty bound he orter) every ’bolitionist now livin, woudent the same sile an climit, an feedin what perjused

the d—d ole cusses what burnt ole, palsied wimmen as witches; an perjused Jo Smith, an ole Miller, en Miss Fox, an Wendil Phillips, an Missess Bloomer, with her breeches an shut, nex year perjuse just such another crop, say? Ove course hit would, an yet the rich strikes in that ar country ove cod fish an mullen stalks, perjused a Hancock an the Day Book, so emaxulashun wont du, yu must kill em jist es yu katch em, es yu du your fleas, an rely (es I dus on my laigs) on hard work in follerin arter em frum generashun tu generashun. They onderstand this ere thing in Texas adzactly; give em a black jack an a pece ove bed cord, an that ar all they ax.”

He studied a long time an scrached, an sez he, “Sutty, atween the flees an your talkin, Ise sorty got tu wool getherin; I swar I hes; when I stopt you tu ax that ar questin, what wer you gwine tu say about the fool killer in connecshun with my case?”

“Oh, nuthin,” sez I. “Do you ever speck tu cum down souf, Mister Linkhorn?”

“No, Sir,” sez he.

“Well, then, hit dont signify,” sez I, an we sot in tu plannin how tu get thru Bald-timore, an save his hide hole, an hit wer done, an done well,

tu, ef not wisely. Me an *Ethredge*, an ole John,
am the only fellers from the souf, what am in
the raffle at all. Nex time I see you, George, Il
tell you how we eucherd all Bald-timore.



SUT LOVINGOOD

Lands Old Abe Safe at Last



ARTER the flees an the tangle-laig an my talk about the juty ove the fool-killer an hits effecks, we couldn't sleep any more, so we conkluded tu start on the fust train. I hed told a tayleur man — with a white face, a big foot turned out a long measurin string, an a piece ove chalk—yearly in the nite, tu measure a terbacker hogshead fur the body, an a par ove telegraph poles fur the laigs an make a jacket an a par ove britches, outen cross-barred truck, an to let them bars run cati-cornered, that is, one what started on the shoulder should aind among the ribs on tother side, an bring along a pot ove red paint an a small bale ove hay. Well, he did hit, an I run the ole Windin' Blades inter the breeches, an tied a string roun the ankles; then stuffed in a

mixtry ove hay an the contents ove the har trunk; I did likewise with the jacket, an per-juiced the biggest cross-barred man you ever seed; tu judge by site, he weighed seven hundred pounds, his hed didn't look bigger nur a apple; I painted the yaller off his face with the red truck, an hit tuck three coats to kiver hit; an I swar, when I wer dun with him he looked like he'd been on a big drunk fur three weeks. When we got outer the train the tavriner keeper didn't know him, an he got off without payin ove his bill; he winked et me es the kers started, an sez he, "thar am two dullars saved, sartin." He hes muneysence, ef he haint eny uther kind.

We hadnt gone fur, when a littil, mild, husband lookin feller in gole specks an a pencil, cum up tu me an sez he, "whars yer agent?" Sez I, "what agent?" "The agent fur yer show." I tuck the hint, an sez I, "Ise the agent." "Ah," sez he, "I thought you were the long half ove the show." "So I is; an Ise the smart half too, an em celebrated fur the use of these yere laigs"; an I onfolded one an reached hit thru the winder on tuther side ove the ker; sez I, "aint that some laig fur reachin?"

He run his eye twist along hit frum aind to aind, an sez he, "Mister, you hes run powerfully

to laigs, didn't a tellergraff pole fall across yer mom afore you wus bornd?" "No," sez I, "but we kep a pet sand hill crane, an mom an him hed a differculdy, an he chased her onder the bed."

He sot that down with his pencil, an then he tuck a measurin sorter look et ole Abe who tended tu be sleep. Sez he, shakin his hed, "that am a monsous man, I mout say an orful man. What dus he weigh?" "Seven hundred an ninety even." He sot that down. "Hes he a family?" "Yes, he had thirty-four children, but a sorter diseas hes tuck off seven ove em, an hes spec-tin more tu die every day." "The ole man mus be in powful trubbil?" sez he. "Not much," sez I; "he don't onderstan his loss." "Is he smart tu speak ove?" "Nun tu hurt," sez I; he sot that down an started.

Ole Abe opened his eyes an reched over an whispered in my year atwist his sot teeth, "that ar las observashun ove yourn, Mr. Lovingood, am a durn lie"; an he straitened up an hunted among the straw onder his close, till he foun wun ove the bottils, an he gin his sef sum comfort, an never ofered me a durn mossel, but hilt the bottil up tu the lite, an sez he, "on thinkin over hit you wer right tu tell him that I warn't smart, ur I woudent be here in sich imedjut dan-

ger, jis fur my party an a pack ove durned niggers"; an he sot in tu thinkin an I went tu sleep, an when I waked he wer a kickin my shins.

Sez he, "Sutty, my son, we am in Bald-timore"; an sure enouff, thar wer lites along boff sides the road as far as you cud see, jis like a string ove litnin bugs; an fellers a standin about with clubs onder thar arms an a revoltin pistil fur a brest pin. I seed ole Abe had obsarved hit, an he wer skared, fur the ash culler showd thru the three coats ove red lead ontu his face, an he scrached his hed an tried tu scrach his stern thru about a foot an a half ove straw an bottils. Then he looked out the winder a minit an fotch in his hed with a jerk an a ketchin me by boff hans, sez he, "great hevings, Sutty, es thar em an orful hell, thar em Eleck Stephens now with his drefull canyon."

I tuck a look an thar stud a pale Ytalian with a dubbil barrelled trumpet strapped acrost his back. Hit did glitter sorter skeary like, that am a fac. They calls hit a tom-bone an sez that hit makes musick.

"Now don't show yerself tu be a fool," sez I. "That feller am in a durned site more danger ove blowin out his own brains with that thing than you am. Sit still an keep yer shut on, Will

yer”; but a big skeer wer on him all over, an I seed that nuthin but a runnin spell would help the ole cowardly cuss. Well, I relyed on these year laigs, I knowd I cud ketch him ef he did break; sez he, a tremblin all over, “Sutty, my sun, of Alex Stephens kills me I want you tu go tu illinoi an tell em that I died in the line ove my juty, like a man orter, an mine, tell em I died game an that my las wurdz wer the Declerashun ove Independence,” sez — an here he tuck a squint et the Ytalian, he hed outstraped his long twisted brass horn an hed hit in his hand sorter shutin fashion, thats a fac — an durn ef he dident go outer that keer like a cat outen a cellar when a broom am follerin; the straw made a monsous swishin sorter soun es he went thru the door an I hearn the bottils a clunkin es he run—I took arter him a hollerin, “ketch him — dont hurt him, Ise a takin him tu an ass-lum, hes crazy es a bed bug but am not dangerous.”

Well, a hevy sot yung feller with his shurt collor open an his briches in his boots an a black se-gar pinte up towards his eye, jist squate on-tu his all fours afore the ole durnd crazy cuss, an he flung him two summersets over him, an windin Blades lit on his sturn an bounced an

the bottils rattlid agin; es I cum up the feller what throwd him sez tu me, "Be Gawd, that fat feller hes et glass works fur supper, hesent he?" "Es like es not," sez I, "hes durnd fool enuff tu du eny thing." "I thot he hed frum the jinglin in his inards when he lit thar," sez he, an then he tuck a look et me fur a long spell; sez he, "Mister, let me gin you sum ad-vice, when you taks fatty tu the ass-lum du you stay out side the gate"; sez I, "Il du hit fur I nos you am a frien ove mine." Sez he, "is thar a tax ontu laigs wher you cum frum?" "Why?" sez I, "Caze," sez he, "ef thar am you am the poorest man in Maryland, thats all. How did the ole hay stack go crazy?" Sez I, "he et hissef outen his sences." "Be Jethero, I thot so," sez he, "I no that he never went mad a thinkin." Sez I, "Mister, you ar right."

An then Ole Abe sot ontu his hine aind all this time either scared or hurt tu bad tu move. I went up an whispered tu him tu git up an git inter the ker, an sez I, "hit won't hurt tu gin 'em a little crazy speech often the platform; hit won't cost you much trubile tu du that, an hit will convince 'em you am addled; jist talk nateral," sez I, "that's all yu hev to do."

Well, he groaned, an got ontu his all fours,

an I swar jist then he minded me ove an orful elephant, called Hanibald what I wonst seed at a sarcus — now jist tu think ove this cross-barr'd gnat beastes bein ole Abe, President ove the United States ove North Ameriky. I swar, natral born durn'd fool es I no's I is, I felt shamed, an sorter humbled, an I sorter felt like cuttin ove his throat an a sellin the hay tu pay fur my shame, an drink all the whisky on his carcuss tu make miself feel good agin, but I shook him up, an got him tu the kers an thar he made a sorter talk.

Bout his wiskers an puttin his foot down on the Declerashun ove Independence an so on — Swisk — spat — pop cum about a peck ove aigs, an they smelt powful. I jerked him inter the ker an hearn a feller holler, “we wer a savin ove em fur ole Abe tomorrer, but durn ef you aint entitled tu a few, fur bein es big a fool es he is.” The kers started fur Washinton an I wer glad.

“Now,” sez I, “ef you'll keep yer mouf shut, Il git yu throu, an hit wouldn't be bad ef yu kep hit shut fur the nex four years.” He sot still a while, an at last sez he, “Sutty, my son, what becum ove Aleck Stevens an his on yeathly canyun? did hit go off?” “No,” sez I, “but you

did, you moved yerself." Sez he, "Sutty, we orter not be hilt sponsibil, when we are onder a big skeer." "That's a fac," sez I, "an that orter be norated tu the pepil, an get em tu endorse hit for hits all that'll save you, Mister Linkhorn, jurin yer stay es President. Jis take the per-sishion that you haint sponsibil while onder a skeer an hit will kiver your hole admistrashun."

"Sutty, my son, you am great," sez he, an we trundled on, nobody knowin the ole feller, an got inter the rume at Willard's; an afore I hed time tu git the hay an bottils an cross-barred truck of an him, I hearn a noise in the passige like the rollin ove a wheel barrer mixed up with a heavy trampin soun; I thot hit wer a Irish-man a fetchin coals, when the door flu wide open an in cum a peacocks feather, six feet long, with all the fuzz stripped off sept the eye at the pint; then cum a hat, shaped like ontu a funnil an kivered with gold, an then har an whiskers enuff to stuff a bed, an then more gold leaf an shiney buttons an then the forrard ainst ove a sorarard, with ole Marcy's hed on top the handil; then a par ove boots what mout a been fire buckets footed, an then the hind aind ove that orful swo-rard, cum supported frume the floor by a wheel es big es a wash pan, to keep the scab-

bard from warin out ; a trailin on the groun an when hit all got intu the rume an wer tuck together hit proved to be Lieut. General Winfield Scott, commander in chief ove all the yearth, an the whole afar, when straitened up, reached on-tu the ceilin about fourteen feet an that orful swo-rard nearly crossed the rume. Ise to dry to talk eny more now, but will tell you agin what that orful mixtry ove gold feathers, iron, noise, gass, an leather did, an how I wer skered. Ain't a ginerall an orful thing tu meet an contimplat, George, perticularly when they am a struttin an a gobblin.



Textual and Bibliographical Note

THESE sketches were published in the Nashville *Union and American*, February 28, March 2, and March 5, 1861. (Not until later, 1861-62, did Charles Henry Smith, "Bill Arp," write his sketches in the Rome, Georgia, *Southern Confederacy* to "Mr. Abe Linkhorn.") Harris undoubtedly intended to add to the series, but if he wrote additional sketches they have been lost. The following changes have been made in the newspaper texts: the punctuation has been somewhat regularized and modernized; paragraphs have been supplied, since the first and second sketches were each printed as single paragraphs, and the third sketch was broken only at the line beginning "Bout his whiskers"; most important, the spelling "Lovengood," which is used most frequently though not consistently in Harris's contributions to the *Union and*

American, has been changed to "Lovingood," to accord with Harris's later usage.

Only one volume of George W. Harris's work has been published: *Sut Lovingood's Yarns* (Dick & Fitzgerald, New York, 1867). At the time of his death, Harris had ready a manuscript, *High Times and Hard Times*, which his widow may have withheld from publication and which has been lost. Although he contributed political articles to the Knoxville *Argus* as early as 1840, and short sporting letters to the *Spirit of the Times* as early as 1843, Harris's first known humorous sketch (in the form of a letter and describing a mountain dance) appeared in William T. Porter's *Spirit of the Times*, August 2, 1845, with the signature, "Sugartail," and was reprinted under the title "Dick Harlan's Tennessee Frolic" in William T. Porter's collection of humorous stories, *A Quarter Race in Kentucky* (1846). Later sketches, under the pseudonyms of "Sugartail" and "Sut Lovingood," appeared frequently in the *Spirit of the Times*, the Knoxville *Press and Messenger*, the Nashville *Union and American*, and the New York *Atlas*.

Mr. Franklin J. Meine has in preparation a full-length biography of George W. Harris; it

is to be hoped that he will edit the uncollected works. The available material is scattered and fragmentary; the best discussions can be found in Mr. Meine's brief but excellent sketch in the *Dictionary of American Biography*; in his *Tall Tales of the Southwest* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1930); in Mr. John J. Heflin's unpublished thesis, *George Washington Harris* (Vanderbilt University Library, 1934); and in Mr. Walter Blair's forthcoming *American Humor* (New York: American Book Company). Relevant and valuable material can be found in Bernard De Voto's *Mark Twain's America* (Boston: Little Brown, 1932); A. P. Hudson's *Humor in the Old Deep South* (New York: Macmillan, 1936); Constance Rourke's *American Humor* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1931); Jeannette Tandy's *Crackerbox Philosophers* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1925); John Donald Wade's *Augustus Baldwin Longstreet* (New York: Macmillan, 1924); Henry Watterson's *Oddities in Southern Life and Character* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1882); and G. F. Mellen's newspaper sketches of Knoxville, collected in scrapbook form in the Tennessee State Library, Nashville.

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